

The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service, a half-hourly, important machinery affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields. It contains information that will benefit the trade union movement.

WHOLE NO. 1135
WILLIAM GREEN, President

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FRANK MORRISON, Sec. Gen.
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Machinery and Unemployment

Dr. Dexter S. Kimball, dean of the college of engineering of Cornell University, told the American Federation of Labor, at its annual convention at Atlantic City that labor-displacing machinery has not impaired the security of the workers and has not been the primary cause of unemployment.

Of course Dr. Kimball meant labor-displacing machinery under the present economic system. Machinery itself does nothing. It is inanimate. It neither breathes nor thinks. But machinery controlled by those who own industry is invented, installed and used for the sole purpose of displacing working men and women made of flesh and blood with machines made of iron and steel which enable a few workers to produce as large an output of commodities as many workers were able to produce either by hand methods or older machinery.

It is axiomatically plain that machines thus owned and used do impair the security of the workers and do cause large amounts of unemployment. When one man operating a modern brick making machine does the work formerly done by 710 brick makers, when one operator a glass-bottle making machine does the work formerly requiring 600 skilled hand workmen, when one man operating a new electric-light-bulb making machine takes the place of 10,000 human electric-light-bulb makers, when machinery in tens of thousands of other instances make it possible for a few workers with the machines to produce as large an output as many workers could produce by hand methods—when these facts are well-known and substantiated it is idle for Dr. Dexter or any other engineer consecrated to the principle of industry operated solely for private profit for those who own it to declare that machinery is not used but to impair the security of the workers and create millions of jobs.

The 1932 convention of the American Federation of Labor covered this question with precision when it declared:

"The machine is good when it is made to serve man. It becomes a menace, a veritable tyrant, when it is used to displace him. The true purpose of the machine is to lighten the burden of labor by enabling greater production for human needs to be accomplished in a shorter time."

Those who own and control our industries have not used the machinery to benefit the workers. They have used it to serve mankind. They have used it for their own selfish interests, for the purpose of making profit for themselves regardless of the interests of the workers and the people generally.

They have installed labor-displacing machinery in every industry. They have refused to declare the intent of the new work and to displace the workers to the increased productivity of the machine. Without the will of an eye lash they have tossed millions of discarded workers into the breadlines of unemployment, reducing them and their families to poverty and the garbage can living produced by private and public capitalism.

They have indeed armed the machine which should be used to lighten the labor of all, into a Frankenstein used exclusively for the benefit of the profiteers who control industry, with the jobs millions and their families living in poverty and the breadlines of unemployment.

With the six-hour day and the five-day week, which is demanded by the American Federation of Labor as a measure to provide work for the unemployed, machinery could be made a blessing for all. Until then it will remain an unmitigated scourge.

It is regrettable that our present gain industry, based on the relentless use of labor-displacing machinery against the workers, should find a defender in the dean of the college of engineering of Cornell University.

More Machinery, More Jobs

The cold, pragmatic determination of employers to keep on increasing the number of the unemployed, and the resulting market for large amounts of human beings was brought into prominence by Roy D. Chapin, Secretary of Commerce, in his review of business trends and prospects at the end of 1932. Mr. Chapin said:

"In the field of capital goods we find that a great deal of industrial equipment is being ordered and is being installed. This is a new and more efficient machinery. Industrialists realize this perfectly. They keenly realize the desirability of acquiring the better devices now available, and thus they are ordering and installing more and more of the productive goods awaiting the first evidence of a sustained upturn."

By "more efficient machinery" Secretary Chapin means labor-displacing machinery by means of which more and more workers are being displaced by the old machinery. He means that the new machinery is being installed which will enable the owners to produce more commodities than a larger number of workers with the old machinery.

When he states that industrialists "realize the desirability of acquiring the better devices now available," Secretary Chapin means that those who own and control industry realize that their own profit will be increased by the cost of their goods, and thus raise their profits, by installing machinery which will enable them to secure more output for less cost.

These facts are not new. This process of course will "save" the industrialists the wages of ten workers, and the only expense will be the interest on the original cost of the new labor-displacing machinery.

It is interesting—or rather, it is tragic—to note that Secretary Chapin does not say a word about the millions of workers who are being displaced by the new machines so that no employees will be dumped into the unemployed army.

Such a policy, which is the policy of the industrialists, would be equally as profitable to the industrialists as the policy of the workers who do the real work of society instead of to those who, through their ownership of the means of production, live largely without either toiling or spending by the clever devices of dividend checks and interest coupons.

But we should not be misled by Secretary Chapin's lack of both industrialist and social vision. He belongs to that socially questionable group who believe that the only purpose of industry is to make maximum profits for those who own the industrial machinery and add the machine and their children for countless generations with billions of dollars of mortgages in the form of interest on the new labor-displacing machinery.

The sole purpose of chaining the workers, without possibility of escape, to the profit-making machine.

In contradistinction to Chapin and his associates, the American Federation of Labor holds that the major purpose of industry should be the common good of all the people, and that the welfare of those who do the useful work is a primary charge that must be fully met before the interests of other less useful groups are considered.

Unemployment and Crime

An increasingly large number of authorities hold the conviction that so-called "crime" reaped by the unemployed is a direct result of the necessities of life for themselves and their dependents is not in the category of ordinary law violation and should receive clemency whenever it occurs. Daniel Willard, president of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, gave an emphatic expression to this belief a number of months ago when, in a vigorous criticism of the criminal justice system, he declared that "a man who steals to eat is not a criminal."

Mr. Willard's statement is not only condemned except by a few reactionary legislators. It reflects the view that when, either by positive action or refusal to act, society imposes economic conditions by which working men and women are deprived of the right to work and consequently of the right to live decently, society must deal leniently with those violations of law which are the direct result of the economic conditions.

This conviction is expressed in a broad way by Will J. French, Director of Industrial Relations of California, in a discussion of the necessity and remedy of poverty resulting from unemployment as a contributing factor to the causes of crime. He said:

"All over the world it is found that the crime wave goes up when unemployment is high. This is natural. Men who are unemployed and their children become desperate. Men will steal rather than watch their children go hungry."

Green Urges Roosevelt to Oppose Wage Cut for Government Employees

A. F. of L. President Declares Improvement in Economic Conditions Cannot Result from Slashing Buying Power of the Masses—Wage Reductions Futile as Economy Measure.

Washington—William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, sent the following telegram to President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt asking him in his conference at New York with members of Congress to look with disfavor upon any and all suggestions providing for a reduction in the wages paid Government employees.

In the consideration of any and all plans providing for economy in the administration of government I most respectfully request that you look with disfavor upon any and all suggestions providing for a reduction in the wages paid Government employees.

Improvement in the distressing economic conditions which prevail throughout the nation can not be brought about through further reduction in the buying power of the masses of the people.

Reduction in the wage standards of Government employees is bound to result in further depression in the wage standards of those employed in private industry.

It is repeatedly emphasized the futility of wage reductions for Government employees as an economy measure or as a means to be employed for the improvement of the economic and industrial situation throughout the nation.

I sincerely hope and trust you will resolutely stand against any lowering of living standards or any reduction of Government employees.

A. F. of L. Opposes All Economies Reducing the Education of Children

Delegation to Citizens' Conference on Crisis in Education Declares Against Salary Cuts for Teachers, Employment of Teachers with Lower Standards, and Curtailment of the School Year—Federal Loans for Education Urged.

Washington—The American Federation of Labor delegates to the two-day Citizens' Conference on the Crisis in Education, which opened in the city of Washington today, declared that any economy which reduces the educational opportunities of children. The conference was convened by President Hoover, took place at the Hotel Mayflower, and was presided over by the A. F. of L. and the American Council on Education.

At a preliminary meeting held at the headquarters of the A. F. of L. presided over by President Green, the labor delegates, headed by Frank Morrison, secretary of the American Federation of Labor, adopted a strongly phrased document entitled "Labor's Emergency Declaration." It provided that the labor delegates' determination to resist salary cuts for teachers, employment of teachers with lower standards and curtailment of the school year. The program stressed the necessity of Federal action to meet the crisis in education.

The text of the document, which was adopted by the delegates, is as follows: "The American Federation of Labor believes our public school system is a national institution of permanent importance. It is the basis of our civilization and the foundation of our democracy. It is the only institution which is not subject to the whims of the majority and the interests of the few."

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DEBAR CHILD WORKERS FROM HAZARDOUS JOBS

Employers Condemned for Imposing Dangerous Work Conditions on Minors—Prohibition of Youth Under 18 in Occupations Hazardous to Life and Limb Sought.

Washington—Severe and merited condemnation of employers who impose work conditions on children which not only menace their lives but injure their health was contained in a report by the Advisory Committee on the Employment of Minors in Hazardous Occupations, made public by the U. S. Department of Labor.

In addition to condemning child labor exploiters for their ruthless methods in turning the minds and bodies of children into profit, the committee also stigmatized the antisocial policy of State legislatures which are so reluctant to take any action to protect the public safety as to be lax in enforcing laws which are so essential to the protection of the child.

The report of the committee also condemned employers who impose work conditions on children which not only menace their lives but injure their health was contained in a report by the Advisory Committee on the Employment of Minors in Hazardous Occupations, made public by the U. S. Department of Labor.

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Labor Will Strike if Necessary To Establish the Six-Hour Day, Five-Day Week, Green Declares

A. F. of L. President Tells Senate Committee the Economic Force of the Organized Workers Will Be Mobilized to Compel Reactionary Employers to Apply the Thirty-Hour Week—Presents Legislative Enactment, But Advocates the Strike as Last Resort.

Washington—Organized labor in the United States will strike if necessary to secure the nation-wide adoption of the thirty-hour week. This emphatic declaration, pregnant with meaning, was made by William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, who appeared as the first witness before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the bill sponsored by Senator Hugo L. Black of Alabama to establish the five-day week and six-hour day in all industries except agriculture.

Mr. Green said he was so thoroughly convinced of the necessity of the shorter work day and week in order to provide jobs for the millions of unemployed that "we are prepared to support a plan to bring it about by other means, if necessary, through legislative enactment, through persuasion or through the strike."

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